

Today, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 4, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007 by a vote of 255 to 170. This bill reforms the Medicare Part D program by requiring the federal government to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies to lower the cost of prescription drugs for seniors. I was unavoidably detained outside the vote but inserted in the Congressional Record a statement that I supported the legislation and would have voted yes. I support H.R. 4 because I believe that the Medicare prescription drug program can be improved. And one improvement is allowing the Secretary of Health and Human Services an opportunity to negotiate lower drug prices.

My support for H.R. 4 is based on the principle that this legislation will not allow restrictions imposed by the federal government on patients' access to medicines. I firmly believe that every patient must have access to the medicines their doctors prescribe, without government intervention. Under this legislation, Medicare beneficiaries are protected against all types of government-imposed restrictions on patients' access to the medicines they need, and that no such restrictions will be allowed under the Medicare Modernization Act as amended by H.R. 4.

Seniors should pay less for prescription drugs, and Medicare should have more tools to achieve savings for our nation's elderly. But these savings should not come at the expense of senior's ability to discuss with their doctors which drugs are best for their health and have access to these drugs in the Medicare Part D program. I am disappointed that H.R. 4 had no hearings or amendments allowed. I hope the Senate will take a considered approach when considering Medicare Part D reform to add more protections for our seniors.